

Community of Practice Tip Sheet

Birthday Celebrations

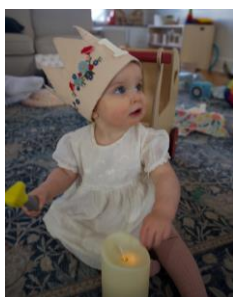


Early Years Teachers have long faced the challenge of how to celebrate children's birthdays in a way that makes each child feel special while also being respectful of the diverse cultural backgrounds in the setting. Another concern for many settings is the tradition of birthday cake, often associated with these celebrations, which may not align with healthy eating policies—especially when there could be up to 22 cakes a year!

Fortunately, some of the creative participants from our LINC+ CPD Community of Practice are eager to share their inclusive and thoughtful approaches to celebrating children's birthdays in their settings.

The Birthday Walk

The Birthday Walk was first introduced by Maria Montessori and is a meaningful activity to help children understand the concept of time and the Earth's journey around the Sun. It celebrates their special day while incorporating learning and reflection on their growth and achievements.



Materials Needed

- Globe or Earth Object: For the child to carry.
- Sun Representation: Can be a yellow balloon, battery-operated tealights, or a crafted sun prepared by the children.
- Crown or Dress-Up Items (optional): The birthday child can wear a special crown, hat, or costume.
- Photos of Milestones: Ask parents/guardians for photos from key moments in the child's life (baby, toddler, learning milestones, etc.).

Steps for the Birthday Walk

1. Prepare the Space
 - Create a circle with the "Sun" in the center. The child will walk around this for each year of their age, representing the Earth's journey around the Sun.
2. The Walk
 - Have the child hold the earth and circle the "Sun" for each year of their age.
 - As they walk, you can narrate significant milestones they achieved. For example: "When you were one, you learned to crawl and say your first words." "When you were two, you learned to jump and use a fork."
 - Or You could sing 'The earth goes round the Sun. The Earth goes round the Sun. Once a year, every year. The Earth goes round the Sun' (To the tune of: The Farmer in the Dell) while stopping each time to look at a photo or two.
3. Reflection on Growth
 - Encourage the child to think of all the things they've learned and accomplished at different ages, keeping the reflection simple and celebratory.

Involving Parents/Guardians

Collaborate with Parents: Before the Birthday Walk, speak with the child's parents/guardians. Ask how they celebrate birthdays at home and request photos of important milestones (e.g., first steps, learning to eat, or special family moments).



Use this opportunity to make links to Aistear and share these with the parents for example

Identity and Belonging:

Aim 1: Children will have strong self-identities and will feel respected and affirmed as unique individuals with their own life stories

Goal 2: appreciate the features that make a person special and unique (name, size, hair, hand and footprint, gender, birthday)

Share with the Class: Use these photos to spark a discussion among the children about growing up and their own milestones.

Additional Learning Opportunities

Explore Numbers and Dates and Seasons: Discuss how we write down birthdays using numbers (month, day, year) and explain their significance, have the children think of the world around them and what season their birthday takes place in.

Cultural Differences in Birthday Celebrations: Talk about how different families and cultures celebrate birthdays in unique ways.

Read age-appropriate books that feature children celebrating birthdays around the world. These stories will introduce various traditions in an engaging, relatable way.